

Reading Room

~~SECRET~~

CONFIDENTIAL

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

29 April 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Proposed Terms of Reference for the IAC Watch Committee

The Board of National Estimates has reviewed the proposed terms of reference for the IAC Watch Committee -- IAC-D-6/1 (Revised), Tab A, Attachment 1. The Board is in sympathy with this effort to systematize the watch function and considers the proposed terms of reference generally well suited to that purpose. Our primary concern is to ensure a clear distinction between the watch and estimating functions. In that regard, we find certain passages in the proposed text liable to misinterpretation, with consequent possibilities for functional confusion. Our specific criticisms and recommendations follow below.

1. The Preamble: we are deeply concerned about the possible misinterpretation of the last sentence. It is obvious that any watch system intended to guard against possible disaster must be able to obtain immediate action on its urgent requirements. The sentence can be interpreted, however, to mean that the least urgent concern of the watch system should have an

25X1

~~SECRET~~
CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~
CONFIDENTIAL

automatic priority over the most urgent requirement of the estimating system. This surely cannot have been intended. Realistic priorities can be determined only in relation to specific competing requirements. Any attempt to assign an automatic overriding priority to every requirement of one intelligence activity, as against all others, must necessarily prove unrealistic. The second footnote on the page, although attached to another sentence, is an apparent attempt to supply the needed corrective. We consider it essential that the last sentence of the Preamble be clarified, and believe that that can best be done by direct amendment to read as follows:

The mission of alerting the Government to indications of impending hostile action is a vital responsibility of the IAC to the NSC and will be undertaken collectively by the IAC agencies as a matter of correspondingly high general priority.

2. Mission: to avoid use of the word "warning", which, as the footnote indicates, is a function of estimates as well as of the watch system, we recommend that the statement be revised to read as follows:

To alert the Government, at the earliest possible time, to indications of impending hostile action, by the

- 2 -

CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~
CONFIDENTIAL

USSR or its allies, such as would endanger the security of the United States.

This revision should obviate the State footnote, the substance of which can be suitably incorporated in paragraph C 5.

3. Functions, para. 2: in consonance with our opening statement, we concur in the State-Navy-Joint Staff footnote and would suggest that the paragraph heading be amended to read as follows:

To analyze and evaluate information and intelligence, both current and cumulative, on an all-source basis, relating to the Watch Committee mission, for the purpose of detecting therein indications of impending Soviet/Communist hostile action against:

(Subparagraphs 1, 2, and 3 would then become a, b, and c.)

4. Functions, para. 2b: we concur in the State-Navy-Joint Staff footnote recommending the deletion of subparagraph 2b, believing that the heavy responsibility indicated in 2a (as the text now stands) is enough to require the full attention of the proposed Indications Center, that the Center should not diffuse its attention and effort, and that 2a can be construed to cover

- 3 -

CONFIDENTIAL
~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

CONFIDENTIAL

all in 2b that is clearly pertinent to the Watch Committee mission.

5. Functions, para. 3: in consonance with the foregoing, we recommend revision of this paragraph to read:

To report promptly their conclusions as to indications, together with the significant evidence,

6. Functions, para. 5: in consonance with the foregoing, we recommend that the State footnote on page 1 and the present text of para. 5 be combined substantially as follows:

The watch function is an alerting, not an estimating, function. The watch and estimating functions are essentially complementary, not duplicative and competitive. The body of national intelligence estimates, based on deliberate analysis of all available evidence and expressed in broad conclusions regarding capabilities and intentions, constitutes the essential background for watch activities. Such estimates, however, are subject to only occasional review and revision. The specific function of the Watch Committee is the continuous evaluation of incoming information for the purpose of discerning such indications of impending hostile action as, in extreme cases, would require

- 4 -

CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~
CONFIDENTIAL

immediate US counteraction, or, in less extreme cases, would warrant immediate review of pertinent estimative conclusions.

7. We have no comment on the remainder of the draft terms of reference.



25X1

Acting Chairman
Board of National Estimates

- 5 -

CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~